

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

July 23, 2004

IN RE:

**APPLICATION OF TENNESSEE TELEPHONE SERVICE,
LLC D/B/A FREEDOM COMMUNICATIONS, LLC D/B/A
FREEDOM COMMUNICATIONS USA, LLC FOR A
CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND
NECESSITY TO PROVIDE TELECOMMUNICATIONS
SERVICES WITHIN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE**

DOCKET NO.
04-00075

INITIAL ORDER GRANTING CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY

This matter came before the Hearing Officer of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority (the “Authority” or “TRA”) at a Hearing held on June 16, 2004, to consider the *Application for Certificate to Provide Competing Local Telecommunications Services* (the “*Application*”) filed by Tennessee Telephone Service, LLC d/b/a Freedom Communications, LLC d/b/a Freedom Communications USA, LLC (“Freedom”) for a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity to Provide Competing Local Telecommunications Services on March 3, 2004. The Application requests the Authority to grant a certificate of public convenience and necessity to provide competing facilities-based and resold local exchange telecommunications services, including exchange access and interexchange telecommunications services, within the State of Tennessee.

Legal Standard for Granting Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity

Freedom's *Application* was made pursuant to, and was considered in light of, the criteria for granting a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity ("CCN") as set forth in Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-201, which provides, in pertinent part.

(a) No public utility shall establish or begin the construction of, or operate any line, plant, or system, or route in or into a municipality or other territory already receiving a like service from another public utility, or establish service therein.

without first having obtained from the authority, after written application and hearing, a certificate that the present or future public convenience and necessity require or will require such construction, establishment, and operation, and no person or corporation not at the time a public utility shall commence the construction of any plant, line, system or route to be operated as a public utility, or the operation of which would constitute the same, or the owner or operator thereof, a public utility as defined by law, without having first obtained, in like manner, a similar certificate . .

* * *

(c) After notice to the incumbent local exchange telephone company and other interested parties and following a hearing, the authority shall grant a certificate of convenience and necessity to a competing telecommunications service provider if after examining the evidence presented, the authority finds:

(1) The applicant has demonstrated that it will adhere to all applicable commission policies, rules and orders; and

(2) The applicant possesses sufficient managerial, financial, and technical abilities to provide the applied for services

* * *

(d) Subsection (c) is not applicable to areas served by an incumbent local exchange telephone company with fewer than 100,000 total access lines in this state unless such company voluntarily enters into an interconnection agreement with a competing telecommunications service provider or unless such incumbent local exchange telephone company applies for a certificate to provide telecommunications services in an area outside its service area existing on June 6, 1995¹

Furthermore, pursuant to Tenn Code Ann. § 65-5-212, a competing telecommunications provider is required to file with the Authority (1) a plan containing the provider's plan for purchasing goods and

¹ Notwithstanding the existence of subsection (d), the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") has expressly preempted the Authority's enforcement of subsection (d) pursuant to the authority granted to the FCC under 47 U.S.C. § 253(d). *In the Matter of AVR, LP d/b/a Hyperion of Tennessee, LP Petition for Preemption of Tennessee Code Annotated Section 65-4-201(d) and Tennessee Regulatory Authority Decision Denying Hyperion's Application Requesting Authority to Provide Service in Tennessee Rural LEC Service Area*, FCC 99-100, (Memorandum Opinion and Order) 14 F.C.C.R. 11,064 (May 27, 1999), (Memorandum Opinion and Order) 16 F.C.C.R. 1247 (January 8, 2001). The Authority has since issued an order expanding a competing local exchange carrier's CCN to provide telecommunications services on a statewide basis including areas served by incumbent local exchange carriers with fewer than 100,000 total access lines in Tennessee. *See In re Application of Level 3 Communications, LLC to Expand its CCN to Provide Facilities-Based Local Exchange and Interexchange Telecommunications Services in all Tennessee Service Areas*, Docket No. 02-00230, *Order Approving Application of Level 3 Communications, LLC to Amend Its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity* (June 28, 2002).

services from small and minority-owned telecommunications businesses; and (2) information on programs that might provide technical assistance to such businesses.

The June 16, 2004 Hearing

Pursuant to Tenn Code Ann. § 65-4-204, public notice of the Hearing in this matter was issued by the Hearing Officer on May 27, 2004. No persons sought intervention prior to or during the Hearing. At the Hearing held on June 16, 2004, Mr. Matt Davis, Chief Executive Officer of Freedom, participated in the Hearing, presented testimony, and was subject to examination by the Hearing Officer. Upon Freedom's conclusion of the presentation of its proof, the Hearing Officer granted Freedom's *Application* based upon the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

I. Freedom's Qualifications

1. Tennessee Telephone Service, LLC is a corporation originally organized under the laws of the State of Tennessee on February 8, 2000, and acquired the assumed names of Freedom Communications, LLC and Freedom Communications USA, LLC from the Tennessee Secretary of State's Office on February 8, 2000.

2. The complete street address of Freedom's registered agent is Mr. Bart W. Howard, 201 Skyline Drive, Dickson, TN 37055. The complete street address of Freedom's corporate office is 201 Skyline Drive, Dickson, Tennessee 37055. The telephone number is (615) 446-2010 and the facsimile number is (615) 446-9207.

3. The *Application* and supporting documentary information existing in the record indicate that Freedom has the requisite technical and managerial ability to provide competitive access services and transport telecommunications services and within the State of Tennessee. Specifically, Freedom's senior management team possesses extensive business, technical, operational and regulatory telecommunications experience.

4 Freedom has the necessary capital and financial ability to provide the services it proposes to offer

5. Freedom has represented that it will adhere to all applicable policies, rules and orders of the Authority.

II. Proposed Services

Freedom intends to provide competing facilities-based and resold local exchange telecommunications services, including exchange access and interexchange telecommunications services, within the State of Tennessee.²

III. Permitting Competition to Serve the Public Convenience and Necessity

Upon a review of the *Application* and the record in this matter, the Hearing Officer finds that approval of Freedom's *Application* would inure to the benefit of the present and future public convenience by permitting competition in the telecommunications services markets in the State and by fostering the development of an efficient, technologically advanced statewide system of telecommunications services

IV. Small and Minority-Owned Telecommunications Business Participation Plan and Business Assistance Program

Freedom has filed a satisfactory small and minority-owned telecommunications business participation plan, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-212 and the Authority's Rules.

V. Compliance with Tennessee's County-Wide Calling Requirements

Freedom has indicated its awareness of, and its obligation to comply with, the requirements of county-wide calling as set forth in Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-21-114.

² In Docket No 98-00639, by Order dated November 3, 1998, Freedom was granted authority to resell telecommunications services in Tennessee

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The *Application for Certificate to Provide Competing Local Telecommunications Services* of Tennessee Telephone Service, LLC d/b/a Freedom Communications, LLC d/b/a Freedom Communications USA, LLC is approved, and

2. Any party aggrieved by the Hearing Officer's decision in this matter may file a petition for reconsideration within fifteen (15) days from and after the date of this Order.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Randal Gilliam", is written over a horizontal line.

Randal Gilliam, Hearing Officer